

**Evidence Summary:<sup>1</sup>****Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG 1.0) Impact Study -- Three-Year Impacts Report<sup>2</sup>**

**Program evaluated:** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) Program is designed to provide education and training to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other low-income individuals for occupations in the healthcare field that pay well and are expected to either experience labor shortages or be in high demand. The first round of HPOG grants (HPOG 1.0), awarded in 2010, provided funding for the development and delivery of a diverse array of local HPOG programs across the country, all operating in their own way with varying program features under broad HHS guidelines.

**Study design:** The HPOG 1.0 Impact Study is a large randomized controlled trial (RCT), with a sample of 13,717 low-income individuals at 42 local HPOG programs nationwide. At the current follow-up – approximately three years after random assignment – the study estimated the average impact of the local HPOG programs on two pre-specified primary outcomes: (i) educational progress (defined as completion of training), measured via the three-year survey; and (ii) average quarterly earnings in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> quarters after random assignment, measured with administrative data (the National Directory of New Hires). Sample members were mainly female (89%) and averaged 32 years of age. Their average earnings in the year prior to study entry was \$9,268.

**Findings on the study's pre-specified primary outcomes:**

- As of the three-year survey, 75% of the program group had completed training, compared to 63% of the control group. This difference was statistically significant.
- Unfortunately, the effect on training completion did not lead to increased earnings. Average quarterly earnings in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> quarters after random assignment was \$5,039 for the program group vs. \$4,997 for the control group (the difference, \$42, was not statistically significant).

The average duration of training in the HPOG group was 7.5 months; thus, the study's three-year follow-up period would likely be sufficient to capture any earnings effects. The fact that such effects did not materialize by three years suggests the program is unlikely to produce longer-term earnings effects.<sup>3</sup>

**Findings on other outcomes:** Among secondary outcomes, the study found no significant effect on the overall employment rate in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> quarters after random assignment (82% in the program group vs. 81% in the control group, two-tailed  $p=0.15$ ). The study did find a statistically significant effect on employment in the health care sector (56% vs. 44%).

The study measured a large set of additional outcomes, such as receipt of public assistance, household income, financial hardship, and child development and well-being. The study found small or no effects on these outcomes. Most effects were not statistically significant and, as the study protocol recognizes, the few significant effects could well be "false-positives" that occurred by chance due to the study's measurement of numerous outcomes.

**Study quality:** Based on our careful review, we believe this was a well-conducted RCT.<sup>4</sup>

**Bottom Line:** This was a well-conducted RCT that found a positive effect on a proximal outcome – participants' completion of occupational training – that unfortunately did not lead to downstream effects on participants' earnings three years after study entry.

## References:

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<sup>2</sup> Peck, Laura R., Daniel Litwok, Douglas Walton, Eleanor Harvill, and Alan Werner. (2019). *Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG 1.0) Impact Study: Three-Year Impacts Report*. OPRE Report 2019-114. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>3</sup> A longer-term follow-up report, presenting findings six years after random assignment, is planned for 2021.

<sup>4</sup> For example, the study had a very large sample, almost no sample attrition for outcomes (such as earnings) measured with administrative data, moderate attrition for outcomes measured via survey (25% for the program group and 30% for the control group), and valid analysis. The study report does not contain the usual table showing that the program and control groups are highly similar in their pre-program characteristics, but given the study's randomized design and large sample it is probably safe to assume equivalence of the two groups.